



Seattle Light Rail Review Panel

Comments on...

At-Grade Stations Along MLK, Jr. Way

(Edmunds, Graham, Othello, Henderson)

Scope Briefing

The Panel was briefed on April 28, 1999 and made the following recommendations:

- There needs to be more work done on the overall street design for Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.
- The location of TPSS and S/C structures needs more detailed review with respect to siting, function, and aesthetics. Invite systems engineers to attend future presentations to respond to questions, concerns, and ideas regarding the alignment and the TPSS and S/C structures.
- Need to more closely examine the storage track issue at Henderson, and the relationship between the bus facility and station.
- More exploration needed regarding landscaping overall; its continuity within the whole corridor and specifically in-between tracks— e.g. the use of pervious materials such as grass, other options to tie and ballast.
- Stations in the middle of blocks raise questions that still need addressing regarding access and entry to stations, and how that access is controlled ("single-loaded").
- The LRRP is also interested in the treatment of the entire alignment and its relationship to MLK as a boulevard, as well as alignment on a station by station basis.
- Areas where the pedestrian access is currently substandard need to be identified early so that they can be enhanced with Sound Transit, the City, Metro, or another entity providing the funding.
- By the next presentation, Sound Transit should be prepared to talk about contextual design cues that they think will help inform the design. In the absence of contextual cues, the designers should be identifying other aspects of community context or culture that could be incorporated to establish a new context for future development.
- Auto drop-off locations need to be identified and discussed, along with access across other modes of transportation including buses, bikes, and pedestrians.

Summary of Issues Raised in LRRP Scope Briefing Progress Report (July 1999):

A reiteration of recommendations from the April 28th meeting, plus the following additional comments:

- Articulation of an identity for the entire corridor as well as individual stations; with Great Streets as a theme for redevelopment of the corridor.
- Redesigning MLK, Jr. Way to accommodate a variety of users— autos, trucks, light rail, pedestrians, and cyclists— with an emphasis on safety.
- Coordinating Link construction, street improvements, and transit-oriented development in phases that allow for incremental and stable growth that minimizes adverse impacts to adjacent businesses and nearby business districts.
- Keeping the community "whole" during the process without letting Link divide the community— physically, politically, or economically.
- Providing facilities for bicycles all along MLK and working to develop safe bike routes— along MLK or on other streets with connections to light rail.
- Siting of TPSS structures away from key intersections and gathering areas that would otherwise be prime locations for redevelopment.
- Access at both ends of the platforms at each station for safety and convenience.

Concept Design

The Panel was briefed on September 22, 1999 but made no formal recommendations; comments focused on the following issues:

- Questions about the timing of the decision to make MLK two or four lanes; thinking that a decision made later on precludes certain opportunities now during the design phase that might otherwise be present with an earlier decision, e.g. wider sidewalks and planting strips if MLK goes to a two lane configuration.
- Consider using a selected parcel of r-o-w acquisition to showcase how development might occur along MLK to support neighborhood and light rail goals.
- Look for ways to reflect the cultural diversity of the community in a genuine and thoughtful way, potentially drawing in the existing cultural institutions of the area.
- Play off of the diagonal street alignment to create urban design opportunities unique to MLK Way.
- Designs need to show the context better, including links between light rail and the rest of the community.
- Be careful not to allow light rail to divide the community along MLK; further develop design elements that will encourage or maintain connections across the street and reach into the community in an east/west direction.
- Having an excellent gateway between the Edmunds station and Columbia City is crucial to the success of Link and the continued health of the business district.
- The "Green Theatre" idea for MLK has merit, but also needs to be reconciled with the goals of station area planning for higher densities and greater development.

Summary of Issues Raised in LRRP Concept Design Progress Report (December 1999):

- While the design concepts created to date have successfully explored distinct identities for each station, they have yet to be tested against criteria for vehicle circulation, pedestrian safety, compatibility with station area planning, and budget considerations.
- The "green" theme depends in large part on sparsely developed parcels in the corridor remaining undeveloped over time. A closer look is needed to determine whether a landscaping/green theme along the corridor can be

carried out and maintained over the long term, or whether another approach is warranted given the likelihood of changing market conditions for development over time

- Explore ways to bring relief from the straight line design of the rails; possibly introducing design elements that meander or otherwise deviate from a straight line and also integrate light rail with the community on either side.
- Pedestrian connections along Edmunds linking Columbia City and the Edmunds station are critical. Edmunds street should serve as a gateway to/from light rail.
- Consider tying into existing cultural institutions as a way to express the cultural diversity of the community.
- Develop connections across the train corridor wherever possible in order to keep from dividing the community. This includes creating a safe and comfortable nighttime presence for Link light rail via creative use of lighting.

Schematic Design

The Panel was briefed on schematic design of the Edmunds station on January 26, 2000 and made the following recommendations:

The Panel commended the consultants for a thorough presentation on the Edmunds station, but nonetheless voted not to recommend approval of the schematic design as presented; and requested that the consultants redesign the station to reflect the change of the Edmunds platform from single-loaded to double-loaded, with special attention to the following elements:

- Landscaping on the platform, along the street, and on the station plaza;
- An expression of the community's cultural history and identity in the station design,
- Ideas for creatively handling water runoff and drainage at the station;
- Access to the station from Alaska Street and coordination with future Rainier Vista development;
- Edmunds Street improvements and connection to the Columbia City historic district and business area; and
- Further resolution of the balance between standardized elements for Link and custom elements that give local identity.

The Panel was briefed on schematic design of the Graham station on January 26, 2000 and made the following recommendations:

The Panel commends the consultants for a thorough presentation and elegant design for the Graham station, and is disappointed that the design will not be going forward since the Graham station is being deferred. The Panel approves the design as presented to date, requesting that additional design work be brought to the Panel for review if the status of the station changes in the future.

The Panel was briefed on schematic design of the Henderson and Othello stations on February 9, 2000, and made the following recommendations:

The Seattle Light Rail Review Panel recommends approval of the Henderson station schematic design as presented, specifically acknowledging the elegant canopy design for Henderson and the subtle differences in canopy designs for

the "family of stations" along the Martin Luther King, Jr. Way corridor, noting that these provide system continuity without sacrificing individual station identity. The Panel requests further refinement of the following elements, and resolution of the following issues, as design progresses:

- Further definition of where trains will stop along the platform and the implications on locations of shelters, windscreens, etc. (especially relevant with 2-car vs. 4-car trains);
- More definition in the use of color, signage, and elements of rhythm; and
- The participation of artists in the design of platform fencing and the OCS.

The Seattle Light Rail Review Panel recommended approval of the Othello station schematic design as presented, specifically acknowledging:

- The elegant canopy design for Othello and the subtle differences in canopy designs for the "family of stations" along the Martin Luther King, Jr. Way corridor, noting that these provide system continuity without sacrificing individual station identity;
- The Japanese garden theme and proposed handling of water drainage on the platform; and
- The overall thoughtfulness of the design.

In addition to the items mentioned above for the Henderson station, the Panel requests further refinement of the following issue for Othello station as design progresses:

- Reconsideration of the linear quality of the platform and how it is perceived by the viewer— all at once or with some elements slightly out of view (akin to the principle of Japanese gardens where the viewer gradually "discovers" parts of the garden);

The Panel also noted its continued support for color in the system overall, and for trees or other plant materials on platforms; recommending a broader discussion of these issues at a future schematic design phase meeting.

Design Development

No briefing scheduled yet.

Construction Documents

No briefing scheduled yet.